

Bookstore fiasco continues

Senate debates over Chapters

by Jason Chow

It appears that the outsourcing of the McGill University Bookstore is imminent.

A workgroup with the mandate to "review and evaluate proposals for the future management of the McGill Bookstore" tabled its report at last Wednesday's Senate meeting, recommending that the Bookstore's management be outsourced to Chapters.

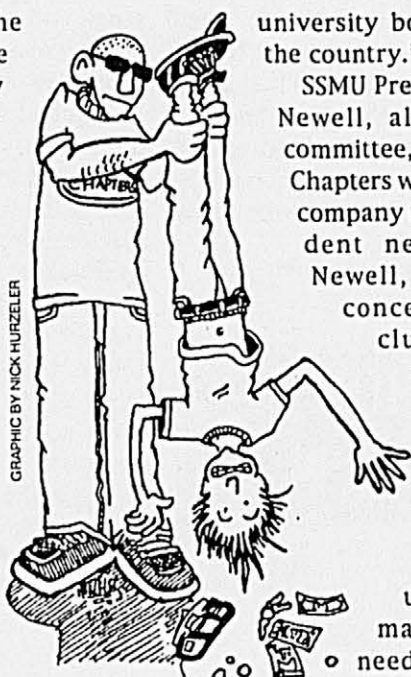
The workgroup stated that it was "unanimous in its recommendation that McGill should pursue negotiations for the contracting of management of the McGill Bookstore with Chapters Inc."

The workgroup was created in the Spring of this year by Phyllis Heaphy, the Vice-Principal of Administration and Finance. She was approached the previous year by Barnes and Noble with propositions to take over the management of the bookstore. The amount of money proposed was significantly more than the surplus generated under the current management. She felt that "it would be irresponsible of one to turn down such a large amount of money."

The committee's report was given to Senate for input. Final ratification to outsource the Bookstore's management will be given at the Board of Governors meeting on November 24th.

The current management, Barnes and Noble, La Fédération des coopératives québécoises en milieu scolaire, Chapters, and Follet Inc. were all evaluated. Although Chapters has no previous experience in the management of university bookstores, the workgroup remained adamant with their recommendation.

When questioned about why Chapters was recommended, Professor Alistair Duff, the chair of the workgroup, responded that Chapters seemed the most able to meet the promises outlined in their proposals. He added that Chapters' apparent lack of experience in this field would be compensated by their intention "to make this the best



GRAPHIC BY NICK HURZELER

university bookstore in the country."

SSMU President Tara Newell, also on the committee, added that Chapters was the "best company to meet student needs." For Newell, "student" concerns included the wish to choose a Canadian company, the expansion of the used book market, the need for rapid back-ordering of

textbooks, and the insurance for student employment. Selecting a Canadian corporation, Newell argued, would insure a commitment to Canadian publishers, literature, and works by McGill professors.

Chapters, she claimed "was the only one interested in expanding the used book market" despite its lack of profitability. According to her, outsourcing would create jobs for students.

Although the Fédération is a Québec-based, student-run, non-profit co-operative, the organization "didn't have an understanding of the anglophone culture" and "weren't there to get [us] out of debt," said Newell.

The present Bookstore man-

agement was also not convincing enough to the workgroup members with their proposal. For Duff, the present management gave "a reactive response rather than initiating change. They did not fill us with sufficient confidence and we did not think they could do the task." Newell said the current management showed a "lack of initiative."

There was much debate during the meeting over whether the report should have been tabled at all. Some senators believed that they lacked the sufficient knowledge needed to add any constructive input to the report. Discussion of the report was cut short due to lack of quorum.

According to Newell, Vice-Principal Heaphy received the impression that the debate during the meeting was about the process of how the report was tabled. She did not believe that there was much criticism about the recommendation itself. Nevertheless, Newell believed that the report will be re-tabled at the next Senate meeting for critical advice before the recommendation is ratified by the Board of Governors.

Known as a champion of the left, Newell admitted that she was "opposed to the corporatization of this university. It goes against my philosophy of education, but one must balance it on a whole [with] the benefits to the students."

Open your veins

Red Cross's return goes smoothly despite silent protest

by Melissa Fleming

Once again, the Red Cross has come and gone. But this year, there was no abrupt cancellation of the blood drive.

Prior to the event, the SSMU and LBGTGM (Lesbian, Bisexual, Gay, and Transgender Students of McGill) signed an agreement stating that the groups would not promote any type of protest that would directly interfere with the Blood Drive.

Blood Drive co-coordinator Andrea Wichtler thought the problems that tainted last year's blood drive stemmed from misunderstandings. She felt that the different groups misinterpreted each other's positions and mistakenly believed that they were all against each other.

"There was a lack of communication last year. This year communication was the key," she said.

Last year, the CRC (Canadian Red Cross) left abruptly after then-SSMU president Chris Carter sent out a press release stating he would try to give blood, even though he is openly gay. Carter attempted this to protest how the Blood Drive donor questionnaire discriminates against certain

groups. After hearing of Carter's plan, the CRC canceled the blood drive.

Although in a letter to the CRC, LBGTGM agreed not to interfere directly with the blood drive, they were able to set up an information booth and silent protest in the lobby of Shatner, to inform people about the discriminatory

This was to signify the loss of potential blood donors due to the questionnaire.

André Menard, Red Cross Public Relations Director for the Eastern Region of Canada had no problem with the LBGTGM information booth and protests.

"They have the right to say what they want to say," he said.

of the CRC blood donor questionnaire.

"Once people are educated they seem to be supportive. It's amazing to see how many people will be giving blood but also be supportive of us [LBGTGM]. It goes to show how the two concerns are together," he said.

Wichtler added, "The information that the LBGTGM gave out was great. It represented a lot of voices on campus. There was very positive action by both parties."

According to Wichtler, the CRC was supportive of LBGTGM's demonstration and recognized the group's right to hand out information. The CRC did, however, take one of the flyers that LBGTGM was distributing to cross-reference the information and check for accuracy.

For Menard, the turn out for the blood drive was not as good as expected. However, he thought that everything else went well.

"We were expecting 850 donors and only had 520. The most important point is that we are back at McGill. There were no major problems and we are happy to be back. We will try to be back to McGill next year."

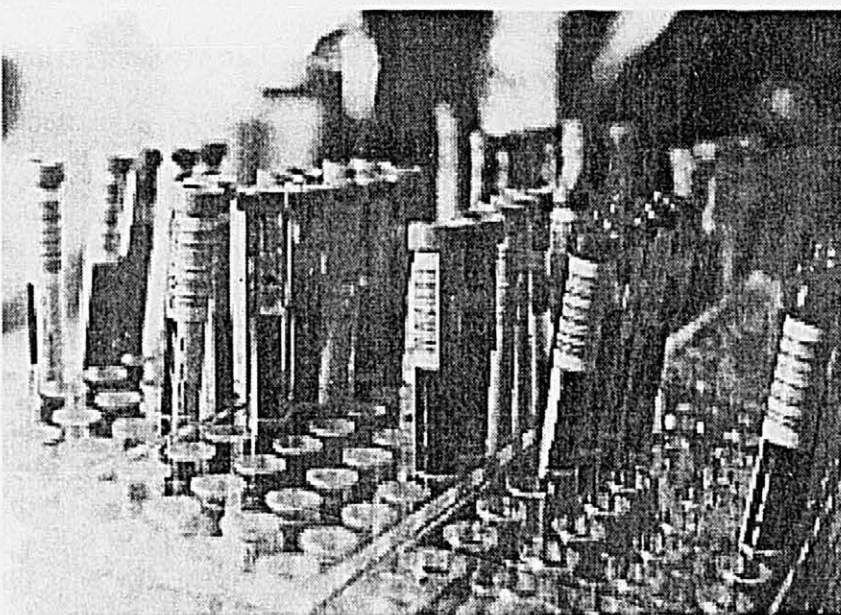


PHOTO BY REBECCA

Blood from the student body: Red Cross back, but donations less than expected nature of the blood drive questionnaire.

In protest, members of LBGTGM painted red tears on the faces of people who supported their cause.

Ned Howie, LBGTGM Political co-coordinator said that the purpose of their information booth was to educate people about the discriminatory nature

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A NEW WALES?

An account Welsh devolution

by Amy Wareham

The British principality of Wales recently approved a referendum on devolution endorsing the establishment of an independent representative assembly.

The referendum was passed on September 18 by a 0.6% majority of 50.3%. Including in the question was the endorsement of a 60 member representative Assembly to administer government grants for transport, economic development, the environment, welfare and culture in Wales. The assembly is slated to open in the year 2000 in the capital Cardiff.

However, according to Marc Phillips, the Chairman of Plaid Cymru, the Welsh Nationalist po-

litical party, "The referendum has not approved self government and it would be a mistake to suggest that it has".

He added that, "forms of regional government are evolving in Europe at different rates, and this is reflected in the differences between Wales and Scotland."

Indeed, unlike the Scottish Parliament it will have the power to pass laws or raise taxes. It is undoubtedly the first opportunity the Welsh people have had since they voted no in the first and last referendum of 1979 to assert themselves through an accessible and accountable representative body.

The Welsh language, women and ethnic minorities will hopefully benefit in particular from the creation of the Assembly, which pledges to represent the diversity of Wales and uphold equal opportunities.

Patrick Thomas, vicar of Brechfa, who campaigned for the Yes vote, stated that "only a body like the Assembly will have the scope and the democratic mandate to tackle such a complex sensitive area effectively."

The end of the existing male dominated, undemocratic quangos should improve opportunities for women in politics and public service in Wales. Currently, only 4 out of the 40 Welsh MP's are female, and women only make up 19% of local authority councils. Undoubtedly these numbers will increase, and hopefully then questions such as why relatively to the rest of Britain women in Wales have, lower wages, higher rates of heart disease, less child care provision, and a lower rate of employment when compared to Britain as a whole

Hopefully, the representation of ethnic minorities in Wales will also increase. Ron Davies, the Secretary of State and leader the Yes campaign, pledged at an August 23rd conference of Black and Ethnic Minorities in Cardiff that the "diversity of modern Wales" would be represented in the Assembly "regardless of colour or language".

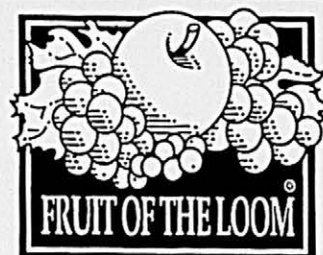
Cherry Short, a black, female Labour councilor, commented, "I see the Assembly as the dawning of a new political era. The history of the British army is littered with examples of domination and oppression through colonization. A Welsh Assembly will move away from subjugation and colonization."

Significantly, not only will the Assembly improve Wales' voice in British politics, but also in European politics. While Plaid Cymru MP Ieuan Wyn Thomas believes that Wales now has "A much better chance of influencing the distribution of regional funds and of playing a positive role in the reform of the structural funds," Plaid Cymru's president Dafydd Wigley concludes that the new powers will keep Wales "in touch with other small nations and regions" in Europe.

Wales held its last parliament in 1404, and the 1536 Act of Union with England created a principality which would be insensitively administered from outside the nation for nearly 500 years.

In particular, Wales has been failed by the last eighteen years of undemocratic and unaccountable Tory government. The very limited powers have been administered by the notorious quangos, whose members have not identi-

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THE DAILY
SINCE 1911

in light of changes in Britain

fied with Wales, were undemocratically elected behind closed doors in London, and have on a number of occasions been accused of corruption. The result for Wales is a crumbling public service, an economy that lags behind the rest of Britain, and a lack of institutional confidence by the people.

Low self-esteem stems from the marginalisation of Wales and the subsequent ignorance and prejudice towards her from outside.

Marc Phillips, chairman of Plaid Cymru, has suggested that the referendum result is an "attempt" by the Welsh people "to regain their confidence after a long period without a parliament during which it has constantly seen itself as a nation."

The results of the attempt reflect a lack of confidence. The turnout was barely 50% and the yes vote won by a majority of only 0.6%. The statistics also highlight a clear division between the nationalistic North and West, and

Labour loyal valleys of South Wales in favour, and the opposed Eastern border regions and South West Pembrokeshire, locally known as Little England because of the large amounts of English people living there.

However, through the establishment of regional committees, the Assembly will reflect these divisions. As well, the new electoral system, which is a combination of the first past the post system and proportional representation will further diversity in representation.

CHANGES IN BRITISH CULTURAL IDENTITY

The achieved devolution in Wales and Scotland is a part of a greater movement towards the decentralization of the British political system, and the subsequent changing face of the country's political and cultural identity.

May 1st marked the beginning of this new era when the British people expelled the 18 year Tory government, in favour of promises of change by Tony Blair's Labour Party. New Labour's desire to bring politics back in touch with the people can be exemplified in its commitment to Welsh and Scottish referendums on devolution during its campaign to oust the Tories.

After only six months in power, Blair has achieved these goals and seems intent on further decentralization. This effort is seen in his proposals to create a separate authority for Greater London to be headed by an elected mayor, plans for English regional decentralization, and the ambiguous pledge that Northern Ireland will have a referendum when peace is created by a political settlement.

McGill History Professor Lewis suggested that "Tony Blair's modernizing agenda can be seen in his devolution plans." Other examples include his reform of Prime Minister's Question Time in the Houses of Parliament, use of all women short-lists to boost the number of women MP's, and his proposal to end the undemocratic hereditary voting rights of the peers.

Not only is Blair committed to an overall upheaval of the constitution, but also of the health service, education system and economy in order to make Britain what he calls a "model 21st century nation." During last week's Labour Party conference in Brighton, Blair promised to create one of the "great, reforming governments." He revealed plans to transform the welfare state by introducing compulsory second pensions and obligatory payments to a fund to finance nursing for the elderly.

Blair is also revising the system

within the European system. The new representative bodies illustrate a shift towards a European style politics, by disregarding the pompous rituals of Westminster, and favouring a mix of the first past the post system of representation and proportional representation. Simultaneously, a new European identity rejecting the old isolationist character of the nation as upheld by the suspicious Tories, is being generated among grass roots. This fact is highlighted by Wales and Scotland's strengthening voice in Europe and the governments commitment to incorporating the European Convention on Human Rights into British law.

This movement towards Europe suggests that the traditional identity of the British people is being eroded. In no area is this more apparent than in the crisis over the monarchy. The monarchy is thought by many Britons, especially the younger generations, as out of touch, outdated and in need of review.

When a recent Sunday Times survey asked 1500 English teenagers what most accurately defined their nationality, 36% claimed their football team, 17% the popular soap opera Coronation Street and Eastenders, and only 14% the Royal Family. When asked what nationality the Queen is 10% answered German. This crisis has been brought to the limelight by the death of Princess Diana, who was regarded by many as the identifiable, approachable face of the Royals; the People's Princess.

Diana's death created an upsurge of emotion that demanded support and guidance from the monarchy. The initial lack of support spawned mass public criticism of the Queen which forced her to grieve publicly, and fly her flag at half mast over Buckingham Palace, even though she was not in residence at the time. Symbolically, this move forced a break with tradition, and may well suggest that the future of the monarchy and the identity of Britain is in doubt.

This erosion of British traditional identity, combined with Blair's reformation of the political system are succeeding in establishing a climate of change in Britain. Modernization of the country's political and cultural fabric, described by Tony Blair last week as a "quiet revolution" happening among the "real modernisers" the British people, is creating a new regional, national and international consciousness. Hopefully, this change will channel itself and assert a new degree of self confidence that will take Britain, and Wales, into the 21st century.

HYDE PARK

A CALL TO ARMS

Dear Friends,

"It's only the beginning — continue the fight," was the slogan we chanted as we emerged late Wednesday night from the PQ minister's office. The thirty-strong student occupation, organized by the CEGEP- and university-based Mouvement pour le Droit à l'Éducation, had paralyzed Montréal provincial deputy André Boisclair's office for nine hours as the opening skirmish in a campaign to reverse recent cutbacks, prevent program streamlining and achieve zero tuition for universities province-wide.

It's only the beginning. Right now coalition meetings are being held across Québec as students join with unionists, environmentalists and anti-poverty activists, both anglophone and francophone, to confront the uncritically pro-investor, budget-slashing agenda of the PQ. Specifically, we are preparing the G Plan, a mass shutdown of the province's main civil service building in Québec City for November 3. With this building inoperable, ministers will be unable to retrieve documents. Normal business will be hamstrung, and we will be in a position to continue the occupation until we get concessions from a party that forgets it was not hired, but elected.

It's only the beginning. Previous protests have failed because they relied on persuasion. We have all heard the arguments for 'trickle-down' economics and corporate tax breaks. We know alternative, people-based economics do exist, and have been successfully tried out. We know what is at stake: that in regions, such as Western Europe, where education and social benefits are more af-

fordable, violence and unemployment are far lower than they are here. If it were an issue of logic, we would have won already. Instead it is an issue of force. If we are to gain Europe's benefits, we must use Europe's tactics. We need to do in Québec what was done in Paris and Belgrade — mass mobilization and shut-down of important institutions until our demands are met.

It's only the beginning. There won't be just 30 of us this time. To succeed, logistically, the G Plan needs a minimum of 200 occupants, and others for a support rally on the street. So far we have 100 who have volunteered to occupy. This weekend there will be a workshop for anyone interested from the Montréal area to discuss non-violent civil disobedience, learn the specific demands for the G Plan and ask questions about precise general strategies (i.e. how will the occupiers get in, considering the police will know where and when the action has been planned to take place?).

It's only the beginning. Resistance is never guaranteed. The G Plan could easily fail; the government could attempt to disregard us, arrest us, call us a vocal minority, as long as new people do not show up. I am using this letter as an appeal: we are not vanguardists; we do not want to 'speak for' anyone. Please come and speak for yourself.

It's only the beginning. But the fight will not continue without you.

To reserve a spot in this weekend's workshop please call 273-1560.
— Chris Scott
U2 Arts

Letters

SACOMSS envy

To the Daily,

This letter might be a little bit late in coming, but I feel that it must be written anyway. I would like to make explicit that my intention in the letter to Flo Tracy, in reference to the *Residence Exposé* article, was not to discredit the journalist who wrote it, since we respect the free exchange of opinions surrounding the issues of sexual harassment and assault. Rather, my intention was to clarify that official SACOMSS statements are made only by the external coordinator of our organization, and that no such statement was made in this article. This correspondence to Flo Tracy was to serve as a reminder, for future

reference, that many groups like to use our name to lend weight to their multifarious stances with respect to sexual harassment and assault. (N.B.: It is not my belief that this was something that the writer of the *Residence Exposé* article was doing.) Ironically, it seems that the act of sending my correspondence to be printed in a public forum is reminiscent of the very problem which I was attempting to enunciate.

We give up.

Christina Gravely
SACOMSS external
coordinator

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It's a Right, Not a Privilege

by Jesse Finkelstein

Take Back the Night, 1997

Night comes faster in the autumn. With less summer sun to keep it at bay, darkness settles over the city earlier each evening. I notice this as I walk towards Parc Lafontaine, where Montréal women are meeting to take part in the 18th annual Take Back the Night March. Moving quickly down the street, I glance instinctively into cars and down alleyways, and wonder if the park will be well-lit. I keep up a good pace by matching the rhythm of my footsteps to the chant in my head — a mantra I have repeated at previous marches: "Women unite! Take back the night!" I consider that slogan. I think about taking back, reclaiming. I try to imagine a time and space in which the night was presumed to be ours.

This night does not belong to me. I feel vulnerable walking alone through the nearly deserted park, and find myself clenching the house keys in my pocket. I hurry past a man leering at me from his perch on a bench, willing myself invisible. I am relieved to see a small group of women gathering around the meeting-place at Théâtre de la Verdu.

Nathalie Leveille, co-ordinator of the Concordia Women's Centre and a march organizer appears anxious: it is seven-thirty, our planned departure time, and few women have arrived. "Our meeting place is poorly-lit," she says. "I'm worried that may make it difficult to find, or that it may have discouraged some women from coming. We should have thought of this before."

Women usually take such considerations for granted, and tend to avoid dark, quiet places at night. Perhaps organizers overlooked this point because of the nature of the march: each year at Take Back the Night, women's safety is assured. Finding refuge in numbers, we take on city streets confidently, boisterously, without fear. For a few hours we revel in this freedom and, chanting, whistling, and shouting, demand that our safety be respected as a right instead of a privilege.

ABSOLUTE RIGHT

"Women's right to be free from violence is an absolute right which cannot be mitigated by empirically discovered social causes," contends Radhika Coomaraswamy in *Some Reflections on Violence Against Women*.

One poster publicizing the march displays the horrific results of violence against women by listing the names of hundreds of women killed by men in Québec since December 6, 1989.

Yet violence comes in many shapes and sizes that can harm

women in different ways. Although most people associate violence with brute physical force used against another person, Johnson and Sacco write in *Researching violence against women* that, "for most women, subtle threats of male violence, unpredictable situations that potentially could turn violent, are more commonplace. For some women, depending on their work or living environment, they exist almost on a daily basis. The fear and the harm these actions cause often go unnoticed."

Nathalie Leveille has told me about some ways in which violence affects her as a disabled woman. "Some of the most common forms of violence," she tells me, "are those subtle ways in which people assert themselves over me and invade my privacy and personal space." She gives me the example of the psychological abuse she suffers at the hands of adapted-transport taxi drivers who bring her to and from work each day. "Some of these men ask me intimate questions and talk at me incessantly throughout the ride. They do this because they can," she says, "because they feel they are owed some sort of thanks for the service they are paid to provide." Nathalie says she knows

"Women are affected unilaterally by violence and all women have a right to safety."

-Karen Hurland

"it's a power thing." Violence has many facets, it seems, and affects women in ways we may not anticipate.

This is what Karen Hurland suggests as she rallies the growing crowd of women in Parc Lafontaine. Co-ordinator of Stella, an organization promoting the rights of sex workers, Hurland insists that "women are affected unilaterally by violence and all

women have a right to safety. It is a popular misconception that women are either 'good' or 'bad,' and that only 'bad' women are susceptible to violence. But if we are to combat violence, we must do it together. We cannot look at the situation in these terms."

Indeed, these familiar categorizations break down in the face of facts. According to the Violence Against Women Survey conducted in Canada in 1993, "51 per-cent of Canadian women [over five million] have experienced at least one incident of physical or sexual assault since the age of 16." 87 per-cent have been sexually harassed. Four in 10 women have been victims of sexual assault. Instances of psychological vio-

"Women's right to be free from violence is an absolute right."

lence inflicted on women are too subtle to pinpoint and too many to count. Regardless of a woman's age, class, colour, mobility, sexual persuasion or occupation, violence does not discriminate.

SAVOURING SOLIDARITY

Women should be angry. And we are. But not all of the participants of the march felt that violence against women should be addressed in such aggressive terms. Responding to march slogans like "no more patriarchy, no more shit," two McGill students say they feel that the march is too angry, too aggressive towards men.

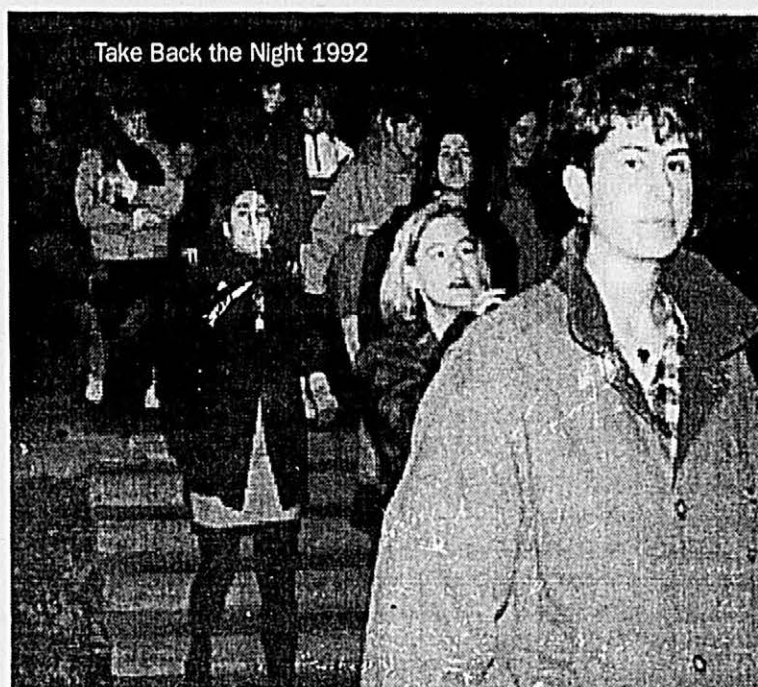
my friend Emily tells me about her unique form of self-defense. "Act like a lunatic," she explains, "and no one will bother you." She claims she walked all the way down Ste. Catherine Street late one Saturday night shaking her body and emitting strange noises and she was left alone. We laugh about this although we both know she is serious. Women are resourceful. We can be experts in the art of staying

safe. As Emily and I trade tactics a woman approaches us to ask for money. She needs a few dollars for transportation to and from work until she receives her next paycheck at the end of the month. She knows of our march, she says, and would have come if she had some leisure time. She gives us some words of advice as we raffle through our pockets and tells us her name is Marie.

Marie stands apart from most of the march participants, who are now

filing into the bar. On the whole we are young, many of us students, most of us white and middle class. I later come across a list of women who, according to the 1993 UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, are particularly vulnerable to violence: these include minority women, indigenous groups, refugee women, migrant women, women living in rural or remote communities, destitute women, women in detention, female children, women with disabilities, elderly women, and women in situations of armed conflict, most of whom do not have the luxury or ability to attend an event like Take Back the Night. Violence does not discriminate, but some of its victims are less able than others to "challenge and fight against it," as Coomaraswamy suggests.

I leave the bar a few hours later, humming the music I have heard and remembering some snatches of poetry artists have performed. I feel "empowered." Walking home, I consider giving over to a bout of Emily's lunacy, but decide instead to employ my usual method of self-defense. Clutching the keys in my pocket, I lunge aggressively down the street, hoping to emit touch-me-and-die signals. Tonight this must be working because I reach my apartment without incident. I am relieved to have once again made it home safely. I think about all the women who will not. I think about taking back, reclaiming. I try to imagine a time and space in which the night was presumed to be ours.



ALTERNATIVE DEFENSE

Outside Au Quai des Brumes, where the cabaret is taking place,

Looking Ahead

McDonough optimistic about future of NDP and social democracy in Canada

by Jeff Webber

The present Liberal government under Jean Chrétien is a political puppet of the financial elite, but the future of social democracy in Canada is still looking brighter, said Alexa McDonough, the leader of the federal National Democratic Party (NDP) of Canada. Last Tuesday, McDonough delivered a speech at Concordia University delineating her vision of social democracy in Canada.

McDonough was extremely optimistic at the commencement of the speech, but acknowledged some of the realistic barriers that the future of social democracy in Canada faces. She referred to the last time that she gave a lecture on the same subject just prior to the June 1997 federal election at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver B.C., and her less than feverish optimism for the future of social democracy at the time.

"I was a little bit taken aback at how guarded and cautious I was in expressing my optimism about the future of social democracy in Canada. But then, that was before the massive re-election of the labour government in the U.K. It was before the return to power of the democratic socialists in France, and of course it was before the federal NDP was restored on June 2nd (the date of the last federal election) to official party status in the House of Commons."

Although her opening statements seemingly contained little more than motivational, political rhetoric, she qualified her optimistic introduction, and proceeded to address specific concepts pertaining to the subject of her lecture.

"I want you to know that I'm not so euphoric about our return to party status, or so deluded about the significance of the federal election results that I'm comparing the election of 21 New Democrats to Canadian parliament, with the election to government of the social democrats in Europe... in U.K. and France, or in the widely predicted election to come in Germany... It is, however, a step in the right direction."

McDonough then spoke of the threat of the massive inequalities that globalism has accentuated, and the deleterious consequences of the pervading mindset of competition as opposed to cooperation. Working within the framework of an increasingly technological and capitalistic world market McDonough admitted that "Compared to the Regina Manifesto [manifesto outlining the policies of the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) in the 1930's] social democratic policies in the 1990's seem somewhat

modest, but I submit are no less urgent." She emphasized the fact that within these new constructs even these modest ideals are made even more important.

The dominant enemy of social democracy, according to McDonough, is "...the awesome power of the beneficiaries of the current economic order to protect their unprecedented privileges against the slightest reduction in their status... The truth is that the

never considered this option. "Which of the two assumptions was at play here, we might ask ourselves. Was it that tax hikes for the wealthy were self evidently ridiculous tools of public policy, or was it that tax hikes for the wealthy would not be tolerated by the powers that really be?"

She then stated another formidable obstacle: "So badly have social democratic values been mauled in the last quarter cen-

effects of globalization, remain an absolutely indispensable vehicle to counter the power, greed, and self-interest of corporate and financial elites."

The meatiest portion of McDonough's speech were her proposals for the new challenges facing social democracy in Canada, and the innovative ways in which the NDP hopes to counter them. First she stated that many of these problems are consequences of globalization. "We call, for instance, for a tax on international transfers of money... payments by rich nations and multinational corporations for their use of the world's common resources, such as the ocean, and the upper atmosphere."

Another important, somewhat controversial, aspect of McDonough's speech was her approach to the national unity debate. This issue was of obvious importance, as the speech was addressed to a Québec audience.

"...The most promising prospect for Quebecers choosing to remain a part of Canada lies in strengthening the social democratic influence in the parliament of Canada and in the policies." McDonough emphasized her party's commitment to National Unity, but questions and statements from members of the audience questioned the legitimacy of her party's approach. The mem-

other Québec issue.

"It seems to me indisputable, that social democratic values, values of social solidarity, of community, of cooperation, of equality and justice, will figure prominently in the choices Quebecers will make for themselves." When finished with her speech, McDonough addressed the audience questions for over an hour. The questions raised varied from issues concerning the environment to aboriginal affairs, to national unity.

According to one second year political science student from McGill, "her responses to the audience members seemed thoughtful and insightful. I found her to be a very engaging and interesting speaker."

When asked by a third year political science student from McGill, "What does the NDP recommend doing for the resolution of continuing Native land claim disputes, and the continuing despair in teenage suicide, and alcohol and drug abuse that is rampant in Native reserves across Canada?" She stated emphatically that an independent study would be done, and the recommendations would be implemented if the NDP were in power, unlike the Liberal government which set up a royal commission (independent study funded by the government) on native issues, but failed to implement any of the numerous recommendations made by the committee.

The optimism that McDonough elicited in most areas of her speech, for the future of social democracy in Canada may not be completely grounded in substantial evidence. It does, however, seem that circumstances in the recent Canadian political paradigm suggest that there may be a shift away from fiscal conservatism. According to a recent report in the *Globe and Mail*, Alberta citizens representing both the private and public sector demonstrated their support for the redistribution of provincial surpluses into health care and education. Alberta, one of the most fiscally conservative provinces of Canada, after four years of 'successful' budget cuts, has been notified by its citizens to reinvest.

Similarly the federal Canadian government is under similar pressures from the public, after slashing public expenditures in its first term in office. Whether or not the actual implementation of social democratic ideals, and an increase in support for the NDP will transpire remains unclear.



McDonough: the future looks good

major multinationals have vastly greater wealth, resources, and influence than many of the member states of the United Nations. The truth is, the bond marketers determine the economic policies of every nation on earth."

These arguments in themselves were typical of the NDP platform but did little to elucidate just how this 'control' by the above mentioned powers was directed. But McDonough then proceeded to cite specific examples. She spoke of how these dominant forces of society, "determine the social and environmental policies of these same nations by threatening to withhold investment, or to lower the bond rating, or to withdraw from the country [i.e. Third World countries] all together if they fail to conform to demands."

McDonough also addressed pressing issues on the Canadian political scene, and how they pertained to her vision of the future of social democracy in Canada. Part of discussing the future of social democracy includes identifying the enemies of that ideology, and McDonough wasted little time naming the present Liberal government under Jean Chrétien, as a significant obstacle.

For example, "never once did Paul Martin or his advisors even contemplate as a means of reducing the deficit, increasing taxes on wealthy Canadians or the financial elites, instead of slashing the services for the most needy and vulnerable," McDonough said.

Further, she asked why they

tury, increasing numbers of ordinary citizens have been all but persuaded that what's good for Bill Gates and Conrad Black, and the senior executives and largest shareholders of the chartered banks, and general motors and Disney corporation, is equally good for the world's citizens."

Since the values of neoconservatism, and neoliberalism have percolated Canadian society during the last two decades McDonough speaks of the ordinary citizens being misled into believing,

"Business good. Government bad. Private good. Public bad. We're compelled to create unemployment to fix the economy. Even low levels of inflation are a larger threat than very high levels of joblessness." This belief is now predominant in Canadian society as a result of the adoption of decades of neoconservatism, and neoliberalism.

Further, McDonough responded to opponents of social democracy who claim that social democrats are outdated, and have nothing new to say about the current state of world, and Canadian politics. "The truth is social democrats have both old and new things to say," McDonough said. She continued by stating that it was true that many ideas of social democrats have not altered, "and I say this unapologetically, because we've not been wrong in our major premise, or in our social democratic policies. Governments, even with their powers curbed by the



NDP leader McDonough waves her hands

bers of the audience who raised questions regarding national unity seemed to be more concerned with Québec's identity than social welfare programs in the rest of Canada.

McDonough insisted, however, that the people of Québec with whom she had spoken during her time spent in a four week french immersion course were as concerned about the ideals of social democracy as they were about any

Awakenings, colour blindness, and other mysteries of the brain

by Jennifer Mudicka

Oliver Sacks, well-known neurologist and author, gave a lecture entitled "Neurology and the Soul" at McGill last Tuesday. The Leacock auditorium was overflowing with interested listeners, as were two other closed-circuit viewing rooms.

In the introduction by Dr. Joel Paris, head of the Psychiatry Department at McGill, Sacks work was described as an "interface between biology and culture."

For Sacks, the title of the talk, "Neurology and the Soul" seemed somewhat strange.

"It is a ludicrous title," he said, noting that it reminded him of the title of an nineteenth-century monograph. However, he liked the vague nature of the title because it allowed him to talk about anything he wanted. He talked about a wide range of topics, including the subjects of his popular book "Awakenings," sensory awareness in deaf and blind people and the restoration of absent sensory modalities.

It was a somewhat sentimental return to Montreal for Sacks, who recalled his first visit, which was his first stop in North America. He landed in Montreal in July of

1960, when he was 27 years old. He described his first visit to the Montreal Neurological Institute.

"It was like a mecca to me," he said. Although his original intention was to return home to England, 48 hours after arriving in Montréal, he decided to remain in North America. He explained that his parents at home in England received news of his decision via a one-word telegram: STAYING.

Born in London, England in 1933, Sacks was educated as a doctor of medicine at Oxford University. After arriving in Montréal, he spent the latter six months of 1960 travelling across Canada, which included hitchhiking across the prairies. He then headed for the sunshine state of California where he spent 5 years. After California, he took a position at the Albert Einstein Centre of Medicine in New York.

It was at a New York hospital where Sacks first encountered many patients who were transfixed in strange positions, some of whom had been like that for 30 or 40 years. He was astonished by this, never having read or seen anything similar.

He was told that these patients

sometimes had brief "awakenings" where they would dance and talk. Around this time there was a new discovery of a drug that could al-



PHOTO BY LORI BRAUN

ter dopamine levels in the brain. Adjusting the amount this neurotransmitter allowed these patients to awaken from their catatonic state.

Sacks resisted the use of this drug at first, being uneasy about

possible side effects that are quite common with revolutionary new drugs. Eventually however, he changed his mind, explaining that the chance was worth taking.

"Some of these people had been out of the world for 30 or 40 years," he said. Sacks feared that they could possibly die "without [ever] uttering a word."

Sacks told the story of a woman he called "Rosie," one of these "transfixed" patients. When she "came to," she burst out talking and singing. She spoke of the 1920s as if they were the present as she did not have any autobiographical memory for the last 43 years. Sacks' book "Awakenings" recounts this and other stories of patients with similar conditions.

Sacks was made aware of the presence of deaf listeners by the American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter at his side. This prompted him to talk about deafness, although he had not originally intended to discuss this topic. He talked about the different experiences for those with ASL as a first language. The brain for these individuals develops differently than those who are not hearing-

impaired. The auditory cortex of the brain becomes reallocated to vision, and provides the basis for the remarkable capabilities people with hearing impairments have..

He went on to elaborate this point by giving an example of blind people, whose sense of touch is very acute. Half of the human brain is meant to be used for visual processes, but in the blind the visual cortex is reallocated to the tactile sense. Sacks said this had been proven by experiments in which the visual cortex of a blind subject was interfered with while the subject read Braille, which resulted in impeded performance. Sacks described these phenomena of people born without senses.

"These people are living from a different centre, and their brain becomes adapted to their needs," he said.

Dr. Michael Petrides, of the Neurology and Neurosurgery Department at McGill agreed with Sacks' assertion. Petrides described an experiment done in rats where the auditory cortex was actually taught to perceive and interpret visual information. He explained that the basic neuro-

Localizing the Middle East

Palestinian-Israeli dialogue attempts

by Olga Hartmann

For the past 5 years, an attempt has been made to create an outlet for discussion between Palestinian and Jewish students. Finally, three years ago, several students were given a reason to solidify this idea, to make it happen. "[The students] kept having unresolved conversations, so they decided to form a group where they would have time to talk about it," said Robyn Merkel, a second year McGill student who has been participating in these discussions for two years now.

The talks are officially called "Palestinian-Israeli Dialogues," and consist of a group of students from all different backgrounds with one common interest — to get issues hard to speak of out into the open.

Nomi Glick, also a McGill student who has been participating for two years, says that the format of these dialogues is unique because it is unaffiliated with any groups on campus such as the Palestinian Solidarity Committee or the Progressive Zionist Caucus.

The change in political environment over the last two years also allowed for the opening of discussion between the two groups. With the Rabin election, there was a general movement towards peace between Israelis and Palestinians.

"Two or three years ago, with the rise of the Labour government people felt more comfortable discussing these issues openly the governments were talking, so the Jews and Palestinians felt they could talk," remembers Glick.

Often, discussions end in frustration, despite the willingness on both sides to listen to each other. This parallels the situation in the Middle East. The issues are continually debated, yet there is constant disagreement and regression.

The focus of recent sessions of the discussion group seems to be the sources and implications of terrorism in Israel. During one of the dialogues consisting of two Palestinian students, Mayada El Sabbajh, Nizar el Hanna, and sev-

eral Jewish students, Sabbajh asked, "How are we defining terrorism? Is it blowing people up or does it include state terrorism to demolish houses and take properties? What is terrorism?"

A Jewish student, wanting to remain anonymous, countered that it is a question of intent.

"When Hamas bombers blow up in public places knowing full well they are killing women and children, is that the same as when Israeli soldiers evacuate a Hamas bomber's family from the house and razes it to the ground?"

Another Jewish student added that Israeli soldiers must satisfy the fear of the Israelis who have suffered through a bombing and should not be sympathetic to the plight of the Hamas member.

El Hanna cited another example of what he considered to be state terrorism, one which had affected himself and his family.

"I was born in the United Arab Emirates but my parents are Palestinian. I am a refugee. My family used to live in the Northern

Galilee. The Haganah killed the young men and expelled the rest. It was only a village of 2,000 people so it took a short time to do so. The village was called El Bassa, and now it is called Betset, near Chanita," said el Hanna.

The disintegration of the peace process can be viewed as a vicious cycle catalyzed by bombings. These bombings cause the panic of the Israelis and the government to react by shutting down borders and withholding promised funds from the Palestinian Authority. The Palestinians then look to Hamas for representation.

One of the main questions addressed during the dialogue was whether or not the Palestinians supported the actions of the Hamas terrorist group against Israelis.

Sabbajh address this question. "The Palestinian audience view [Hamas] as their only liberation movement. The reason why [Arafat] doesn't crack down on terrorism is because he would lose respect from his people. If you

treat a human in an inhuman way, you have to expect them to act in a subhuman manner," she said. It was then asked whether or not that meant that Hamas and the Palestinian nation as a whole had the same goals, and what they were.

El Hanna later explained, "The basic goal of Hamas is the liberation of the whole of Palestine, which is not realistic to some people but nevertheless it is a utopic goal for us. The Palestinians all agree with the need for the liberation of Palestine. The message used is not agreed upon by all Palestinians, such as the bombings."

El Hanna went on to say that Hamas is not only a militant organization but also gives out humanitarian aid to the Palestinians "For many Palestinians its a source of food and income, and in a way they are forced to agree with what Hamas does," she said.

Traditionally, Hamas has been viewed as a grass roots group of impoverished bandits with the

Neurologist Oliver Sacks speaks at McGill

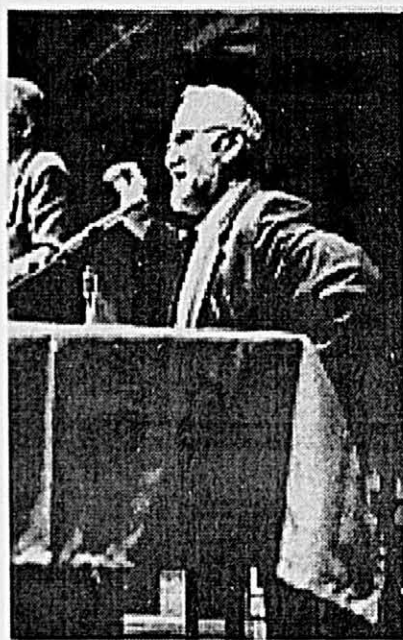
anatomy of the brain does not actually change in these instances.

"The connections between the different areas still exist, but other areas process information from senses other than those for which they are designed," he said.

Sacks then talked about whether the brain could re-adapt if a sense that had been missing since birth was later restored. Sacks recounted the case of a blind man that had an operation to regain his sight in mid-life. This operation, in Sacks' opinion, was given without proper consent, and was decided on mostly by the attending surgeon and the patient's wife. The cataracts, which had caused the blindness, were removed. However, the visual cortex of the brain had not been developed for sight in this patient and he was in a world of chaos upon awakening. The cortical cells which had been used for perceiving auditory stimuli were not equipped to interpret the visual stimuli that they were suddenly encountering.

Sacks described this poor man as being in "limbo between two worlds," and quoted a blind theologian, who had used a religious

analogy in saying: "One needs to die as a blind person, to be born as a sighted person." What he meant by this is that the brain's adaptation to the condition of blindness still existed in the patient, and had not yet "died," therefore, he could not begin to



PHOTOS BY LORI BRAUN

live as a sighted person.

Sacks also told the story of a man he knew who became colour blind after a head injury. The man was

an artist, who had been well known for his expressive use of colour. He wrote to Sacks asking for help after ophthalmologists and hypnotists were unable to alleviate his condition. There was nothing that Sacks could do either. After a month the man began to adapt, and "what was a disaster became a change in perception". The artist found that his sensitivity to other visual properties such as contour and luminosity had improved. When this man was later offered a chance to have his colour vision restored, through an operation, he refused.

Dr. Sacks finished his lecture by re-iterating that "we determine our nervous system to an enormous degree", that our brain is our personality, the "brain [being] fused with the self". He concluded by saying that our identity is in fact robust, even in cases of severe dementia such as Alzheimer's.

Oliver Sacks is the author of *Awakenings*, *The Man Who Mistook His Wife For a Hat*, *An Anthropologist on Mars*, *Island of the Colorblind*, *Seeing Voices* and *A Leg To Stand On*, an autobiographical account.

to increase understanding

Robin Hood syndrome. In actuality, Hamas is a rich organization with far reaching influence. Despite its generosity towards Palestinians, Yassar Arafat has pledged to the Israeli government since both the Oslo Accord and subsequent terrorists acts to denounce and discourage Hamas actions.

However, three days ago both Jordanian leader King Hussein and Arafat went to pay their respects to the dying founder and leader of Hamas, Sheik Ahmed Yassin.

As reported in the recent October 3 *Montreal Gazette* "The 61 year old Yassin...is the...leader of Hamas, the militant Islamic Organization that has taken credit for most of the suicide bombings of the past two years. He was in prison for founding the organization and ordering attacks by Hamas guerillas against Israelis. Hamas is dedicated to ending the Oslo, Norway, peace process."

The article goes on to say that the reason for Arafat's visit is the tremendous pressure being put upon him by both Israel and the

Palestinians. "Hamas remains popular among the Palestinians—particularly at times when the peace process appears to be stalled."

There was discussion about how the Israeli government can better handle an emergency terrorist situation so that the Palestinians will not turn to Hamas for support. El Hanna talked about what he thought would be possible.

"Instead of freezing funds that go to humanitarian aid in the territories, they should let trade flow in, such as food and other necessities. There is one level where they close the areas that have boundaries with Israel. But the next level is to close everything so they can't go from one Palestinian area to another. This is too harsh," she stated.

The Palestinian Government has accounts in Israeli banks which become frozen when Israelis feel that security has been breached. According to Nizar, these accounts should not be frozen, as they are essential for the

functioning of the Palestinian government. It damages their credibility to render them incapable of action.

The same Jewish student asking for anonymity, asked the group why there had been no attempt on the part of the Palestinians in the West Bank to rally together and peacefully demonstrate, in order to counter the methods used by Hamas.

A group of people responded that peaceful demonstrations would never catch the attention of the media because there was no bloodshed involved. The Intifida was publicized because there were acts of violence by both the Palestinians as a whole and the Israeli soldiers.

"Now no one is demonstrating because there is supposed to be a peace process going on. Only political groups are involved in the demonstration, such as Hamas," said Sabbajh. The fact that the only demonstration currently in use is terrorism has been brutally damaging for both sides.

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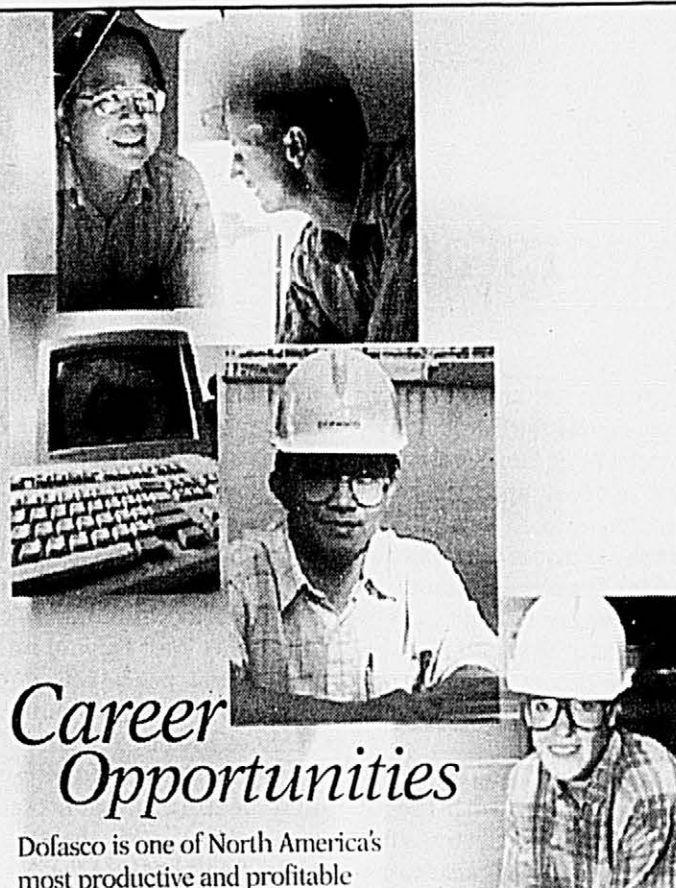
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